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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2016
TAGS: [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KCRM](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: GUNMEN KILL NEWSPAPER WORKERS IN GEORGETOWN

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 406

[1](#)B. GEORGETOWN 372
[1](#)C. GEORGETOWN 205

Classified By: Political Officer Benjamin Canavan
For Reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY. Guyana is aghast at the brutal killing of six men August 8 by roving gunmen. The main target of the operation was the complex where the independent Kaieteur News is printed, located in Eccles along the road connecting Georgetown to the airport. The killings are reminiscent of a February paramilitary-style operation in the same area that killed eight (ref C) and the March assassination of Agriculture Minister Sawh (refs A and B). END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (U) Following is a sequence of events August 8, drawn from media reports and EmbOffs' conversations with contacts:

-- A riot broke out at the Camp Street prison around 19:00 to 21:00 (reports vary). This overcrowded urban prison, located just south of central Georgetown, is the largest in Guyana. Inmates broke windows and threw out mattresses, apparently in a protest over prison conditions. The Guyana Police Force (GPF) locked down the prison and closed off surrounding streets. Some observers are speculating that the prison riot was intended to distract the police from the operation that followed. Post has not yet learned of evidence that directly links this event to the subsequent killings.

-- Shortly before 22:00, gunfire was heard in Bagotstown, just south of the city and less than a mile from Eccles. Details of this part of the operation are sketchy, but it appears that two were killed and others injured by ten to fifteen roving gunmen in the Bagotstown area.

-- Between 22:00 and 22:30, a group of gunmen -- said to be separate from the gang in Bagotstown -- approached the Kaieteur News printery located in the Eccles industrial estate. The gunmen shot the security guard before entering the building. They ordered five employees to lie on the floor and shot them in the head execution-style. One of the employees survived and is in intensive care. A sixth employee managed to hide. By 23:00 media and police were on the scene. No arrests have been made. The ethnicity of the attackers is unknown. At least some of the gunmen wore masks.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT. Post's interlocutors are puzzled as to the motive for these killings and we can only speculate. One

theory is that this was a response to ongoing joint army/police operations against Afro-Guyanese criminal enclaves in Buxton and other coastal villages east of Georgetown. Another theory points in the other direction. Kaieteur's publisher Glenn Lall told PolOff recently that People's Progressive Party (PPP) officials have pressured him to tone down his columnists' criticism of the ruling PPP. On August 7, Lall expressed his fear that his interests might be attacked. What is clear is that the gunmen intended to send a message rather than commit a robbery. These events shatter the short period of relative calm that had prevailed in Georgetown for the past couple months -- since Shaheed "Roger" Khan exited the scene and as election preparations fell into place. END COMMENT.

SANDS